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USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE - PASS TO POLAND

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/10/15

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [NI](#)

SUBJECT: (C) NIGERIA: CHIEF OF DEFENSE STAFF ON THE
SPECTER OF CIVIL WAR IN THE DELTA, ILLEGAL ARMS FLOWS,
AND U.S./NIGERIA MILITARY TO MILITARY RELATIONS

Classified by: Ambassador John Campbell for reasons 15
B, D

¶1. (C) Summary: Gen. Martin Luther Agwai, Chief of Defense Staff and the most senior military official in Nigeria, acknowledges the danger that the current Delta crisis will evolve into civil war, acknowledges that many of the illegal arms in the Delta come from military armories, and, while affirming that U.S./Nigeria military to military relations are at present good, stated that previous U.S. suspension of training and other forms of assistance has resulted in skepticism about our reliability as a partner among a generation of Nigerian military officers younger than himself and unfamiliar with the U.S. There was a brief, inconclusive discussion about the upcoming Gulf of Guinea security meetings in London at the end of November. EUCOMQs Gen. Ward invited Gen. Agwai to visit Stuttgart, and Gen. Agwai accepted in principle. End summary.

¶2. (C) EUCOMQs Gen. William (QKipQ) Ward called on Nigerian Chief of Defense Staff Martin Luther Agwai on November 23 with his accompanying party. After pleasantries, Gen. Agwai asked to meet privately with the General, DOD DAS Teresa Whelan and the Ambassador. No one else was present, save a Nigerian note taker. This private meeting lasted more than one hour. Gen. Agwai effusively expressed his admiration for the United States and recalled with affection and pleasure his many training opportunities with the U.S. military. NB: his wife, an employee of the UN system, and children live in New York. He was also effusive about the importance of a close U.S./Nigeria military-to-military relationship. Nevertheless, amidst the manifest good will and gift exchanges, Gen. Agwai delivered important messages.

¶3. (C) On the Delta, Gen. Agwai said that the current unrest and militia activity risks becoming a full-blown civil war. He spoke with feeling about the tragedy that would be, making specific reference to one of his officers stationed there, an indigene that might be called upon to fire upon his own people. He acknowledged that the origin of many of the illegal weapons flowing into the Delta is Nigerian military armories, and welcomed heartily DAS WhelanQs offer to revive U.S.-led multilateral efforts to develop Nigerian capacity to trace illegal weapons.

¶4. (C) With respect to the Nigerian military, sprinkled through Gen. AgwaiQs conversation were references to a generational divide. He contrasted

his generation of senior officers, all of whom have had exposure to the U.S. and/or the UK, with younger officers, who, because of the suspension or costs of U.S. training, were far more likely to have been to China or India, or even North Korea. His generation understood U.S. separation of powers and the role of Congress with respect to the suspension of IMET; younger officers do not, and instead see a pattern of U.S. inconsistency in the military-to-military relationship. Even now, he continued, U.S. training opportunities are hobbled because of the cost. A multiple of Nigerian officers could be trained in China for the cost of a single officer at the National War College, for example. This reality made it difficult for him to expand the number of Nigerian officers taking advantage of the U.S. training opportunities that are available now. Despite these difficulties, Gen. Agwai reaffirmed over and over again the advantages of U.S. military training, and invited direct out-of-channels contact with his office whenever there are snags on the Nigerian side.

15. (C) Looking toward the upcoming London Gulf of Guinea security talks, DAS Whelan proposed that Nigeria and the U.S. present a joint briefing on progress to date. This approach, she suggested, could bridge an Qus vs. themQ atmosphere that sometimes has characterized previous rounds, and emphasize the level of cooperation already achieved. Gen. Agwai did not respond to this suggestion, and instead focused on the lack of continuity amongst Nigerian military participants to date in the series of talks. This, he said, he is correcting.

16. (C) Comment: Gen. AgwaiQs candor on the Delta is unprecedented among top civilian and military officials in our experience, and was doubtlessly encouraged by the warm relationship he rapidly developed with Gen. Ward. The line from the Villa has been that Delta unrest is the result of criminals and lack of economic development. (Despite the fanfare around various development initiatives in the Delta, we see little sign of anything happening.) Agwai appeared to see the causes as deeper and longstanding. AgwaiQs concern about the possibility of civil war may explain the exceptional restraint shown by the Nigerian military thus far, despite the magnitude of casualties it has suffered. AgwaiQs willingness to face the truth about the origin of many of the illegal arms is also new to us. Previous multilateral efforts to trace illegal arms have foundered on Nigerian military refusal to allow outsiders access to its armories. His analysis of generational differences within the military parallels our own Q though he is more authoritative. We were surprised that he did not pick up on DAS WhelanQs proposal for a joint briefing in London on Gulf of Guinea progress to date. The DATT will follow up with AgwaiQs office.

17. (C) AgwaiQs pro-American stance was palpable through his meeting with Gen. Ward. We suspect it may cause him some difficulties with his other military colleagues, though thus far he appears to have overcome them. His invitation that we deal with him directly on training snags, avoiding protocol and chain of command issues, is a frequent senior Nigerian response to mistakes. However, no matter how sincere the invitation is at the time, our experience has been that such a procedure soon breaks down in practice, not least because strong leaders like Agwai are inevitably overstretched in Nigeria. Before his promotion, Agwai was the Chief of Army Staff; President Obasanjo often dealt directly with him on international peacekeeping and other issues, rather than working through the then-Chief of defense Staff, Gen. Ogunmudia. As the President functions essentially as his own Minister of Defense, Presidential support is probably essential to Agwai,

who was leap-frogged into his present position over more senior officers. End comment.

18. (U) This message has been cleared by the offices of Gen. Ward and DAS Whelan.

CAMPBELL